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The End of Men? — A Hard Look at the Future

What does it mean for large sectors of our society to become virtual matriarchies? How do we prepare the church to deal with such a world while maintaining biblical models of manhood and womanhood? ...The real issue here is not the end of men, but the disappearance of manhood.

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Is our postmodern, postindustrial society simply better suited to women than to men? Hanna Rosin makes the case for this claim in the current issue of *The Atlantic*, and her article demands close attention. Men, she argues, are simply falling behind women in almost every sector of cultural influence and economic power. This shift, she understands, is nothing less than unprecedented in the span of human history.

Rosin begins her article with the fact that sex-selection technologies in the West are now more often used to select a preference for girls than for boys, reversing the historical trend. Why? She explains: “Man has been the dominant sex since, well, the dawn of mankind. But for the first time in human history, that is changing—and with shocking speed. Cultural and economic changes always reinforce each other. And the global economy is evolving in a way that is eroding the historical preference for male children, worldwide.”

Rosin’s article is well documented and forceful in argument. The bottom line is the claim that the trend and trajectory of the global economy have for some time now been headed toward female skills and talents. At the most basic level, this means a shift from physical strength to intellectual energies and education. At the next level, it also means a shift from leadership models more associated with males toward the nurturing leadership more associated with women. In any event, the changes are colossal.

Nothing has brought this into clearer sight than the current global recession. In the United States, the recession has been dubbed a “he-cession,” due to the fact that three-quarters of the 8 million jobs lost were lost by men. Even more devastating to men, most of these jobs will not return, given the vast changes the recession has brought about. “The worst-hit industries were overwhelmingly male and deeply identified with macho: construction, manufacturing, high finance. Some of these jobs will come back,” Rosin predicts, “but the overall pattern of dislocation is neither temporary nor random.”

It’s not just the United States, either. In Iceland, Prime Minister Johanna Sigurdardottir (the first openly-lesbian head of state) ran her campaign for office with a pledge to end the “age of testosterone.”

But the picture in the United States is particularly striking. For the first time in the nation’s history, women now outnumber men in the workforce. The working class, “which has long defined our notions of masculinity,” Rosin argues, is “slowly turning into a matriarchy, with men increasingly absent from the home and women making all the decisions.”

Why? “The postindustrial economy is indifferent to men’s size and strength. The attributes that are most valuable today — social intelligence, open communication, the ability to sit still and focus — are, at a minimum, not predominately male.”

Rosin actually makes two main points, and both demand attention. The first has to do with what is taking place in



working class families. The matriarchy Rosin describes is now coming more fully into view. In many cases, it is husbands and fathers who are unemployed and wives and mothers who have paying jobs. This means a huge shift in male function, and many men just exit the family process or forfeit decision making. Rosin refers to these men as “casualties of the end of the manufacturing era.” Across the nation, older men are increasingly unemployed and younger men face little hope of a job in this sector — the virtual birthright of previous generations.

Of the fifteen job classifications marked for future growth, men dominate only two: janitorial services and computer engineering. The same pattern is now extending to managerial and professional roles, where women currently hold 51.4 percent of jobs. Why are women gaining and men falling behind? Rosin explains:

They make up 54 percent of all accountants and hold about half of all banking and insurance jobs. About a third of America’s physicians are now women, as are 45 percent of associates in law firms—and both those percentages are rising fast. A white-collar economy values raw intellectual horsepower, which men and women have in equal amounts. It also requires communication skills and social intelligence, areas in which women, according to many studies, have a slight edge. Perhaps most important—for better or worse—it increasingly requires formal education credentials, which women are more prone to acquire, particularly early in adulthood.

Beyond the numbers, Rosin reports that office environments and corporate cultures are adapting to women, as well, reshaped by the gender transformation of the last twenty-five years.

And yet, even after all this, Rosin makes her most powerful argument when she looks, not at the current workforce, but at what is happening on America’s college and university campuses. There, she explains, “we can see with absolute clarity that in the coming decades the middle class will be dominated by women.”

She continues:

We’ve all heard about the collegiate gender gap. But the implications of that gap have not yet been fully digested. Women now earn 60 percent of master’s degrees, about half of all law and medical degrees, and 42 percent of all M.B.A.s. Most important, women earn almost 60 percent of all bachelor’s degrees—the minimum requirement, in most cases, for an affluent life. In a stark reversal since the 1970s, men are now more likely than women to hold only a high-school diploma. “One would think that if men were acting in a rational way, they would be getting the education they need to get along out there,” says Tom Mortenson, a senior scholar at the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. “But they are just failing to adapt.”

While many theories to explain this pattern have been offered, no one can argue with the numbers. Boys are clearly falling behind girls in both educational achievement and aspiration. The long-term consequences of this shift are momentous and virtually impossible to reverse in a single generation. This pattern has vast implications for marital prospects, since women express a strong preference to marry a man of equal or greater educational and professional potential. The collapse of the marriage culture within the working class, Rosin argues, is due to the fact that women are in control and have set expectations “too high for the men around them to meet.”

Hanna Rosin’s article is not the first salvo of information on these troubling trends, but the fact that *The Atlantic* chose her essay as a cover story is itself evidence of how this phenomenon is taking hold of attention, even among the elites.

For Christians, the importance of this article is even greater. God intended for men to have a role as workers, reflecting God’s own image in their vocation. The most important issue here is not the gains made by women, but the displacement of men. This has undeniable consequences for these men and for everyone who loves and depends on them.

The failure of boys to strive for educational attainment is a sign of looming disaster. Almost anyone who works with youth and young adults will tell you that, as a rule, boys are simply not growing up as fast as girls. This means that their transition to manhood is stunted, delayed, and often incomplete. Meanwhile, the women are moving on.

What does it mean for large sectors of our society to become virtual matriarchies? How do we prepare the church to deal with such a world while maintaining biblical models of manhood and womanhood?

The elites are awakening to the fact that these vast changes point to a very different future. Christians had better know

that matters far more important than economics are at stake. These trends represent nothing less than a collapse of male responsibility, leadership, and expectations. The real issue here is not the end of men, but the disappearance of manhood.

I am always glad to hear from readers. Write me at mail@albertmohler.com. Follow regular updates on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler.

Hanna Rosin, "[The End of Men](#)," *The Atlantic*, July/August 2010.

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